

A
SOBER ENQUIRY

About the

New Oath

Enjoyed on

NON-CONFORMISTS

According to *Act of Parliament.*

Whether *Passion, Prejudice, Partiality, &c.* must not be lay'd aside in this Business?

Whither living under a Lawful Government, and expecting *Protection* from it, I do not owe *Allegiance* to it, and must Submit, and not endeavour to alter the Government, especially when this is made the *Condition* of my living under its *Protection*?

Whither Considering the *State* of the times, and the intention of our Governours, to secure

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the Peace at home against *bosom Enemies*, of which sort there are too many, is it not rational to expect *security* from us, and that by a lawful Oath or some other way?

Whither the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy, mainly intended and understood against the Papists, will give you sufficient security, considering the Principles and Practices of the late times; (too too sadly yet remaining with many) the which are signified in the *Act for safety both of King and Kingdome*; and should not the new Oath respect such pernicious Principles and practices, as at present are like (if not most warily prevented) to endanger both Church and State, both *King and Kingdome*?

Whither they could not easily have ordered it, in another form, directly and in terms reversing the Covenant; and was it not through Providence and Prudence, ordered as it is; that *sober and peaceable* may be distinguished from those that will not rest till all return to their old Confusions?

Whither the Oath, though in Expressions somewhat ambiguous, may not be well enough understood by unbiassed persons, that will not stretch their Charity, to suppose what their fancies will imagine of their Governours, and their intentions

intentions in it; *since*, the words of the *Preamble*, and the *Act for Safety*, (to whom this must be referred) and other known Laws, and Customs of the Land, will give them sufficient information; and *since*, the sence of Governours in their Laws, if not plain in words, is to be by private men (till a publick Authentique interpretation) understood by common usage, and comparing with other Laws, or parts of the Law to which it belongs and may be refer'd *, and not by our private *suppositions* of their Intentions not expressed in their Laws?

* See *Preamble, Act for Safety, Lord Chancellours and the Speakers Speeches*. And for the Legislative Power, see *Act for Safety*. For the Militia, the *Acts about it*. For Church Government, see such Laws as *Settle or declare all Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction in the King*, and the Exercise of it only as in Commission from his Majesty, about Bishops and their Powers, see Laws referred to them, and sometimes granting more, and sometimes less. Read 1. Eliz. 1. 2. and 5. Eliz. 1. 32. H. 8. c. 6. 1. Ed. 6. c. 2. 25. H. 8. c. 19. & c. 21. and an *Act of this present Parliament repealing*, 17. Car. 1. See *Cook's Institutes*, part. 4. and his Reports about Ecclesiastical Matters, and *Part. Cawdryes Case*, &c.

Whither this Oath can be rationally supposed to Bind us up from more, then endeavouring to overturn the foundation of the Government of Church or State, as to the King in both, and (if you will too) Bishops in the Gover-

ment of the Church; *Anything* more then these being accounted by the *Laws* of the Land, and by the *Practices* of our *Kings*, *Parliaments*, *Synods*, as *alterable*, and hath been, and may be dayly (if duely) *altered*? Or, if this Oath may be supposed to bind us up from more, as to particulars and *superstructures* in *Constitutions* and *Administrations*, whither then can it rationally be supposed to intend more, to bind us up from a *turbulent* and *irregular* endeavour of altering, or (as expressed in the *Preamble* and *Act for safety*) in a way of *Schisme*, *Sedition* and *Rebellion*, and whither can this Oath be justly understood to bind us up from *Peaceable* and *Regular* endeavours of reforming what may be found amiss in Church or State; *since* that the *Government* it self to which in the Oath I swear with, the *Fundamental* and *Positive* *Laws* of the Land allow me, as a Man, an *Englishman*, a *Christian*, a *Subject*; my *Just*, though bounded *libertie* in that particular? and must not this be understood though not expressed in the Oath?

* See *Magn. Charta. c. vet. King Coronat. Oath. Act about Petitioning, &c.*

Whither other *parallel* Oaths, binding to *Government* and *Laws*, be not thus by *general Reason*.

Reason, Consent and Custome, understood? as the Kings Coronation Oath, with *Non Mutabimus leges & Consuetud.* the Oaths that Members of Parliament, and of Convocation take; the Oaths for Judges, and other Lawyers; the Oaths in Courts, Corporations, Universities, &c. Compared with their known and allowed practises, in their places, changing and altering as to particulars both in Church and State.

* *About the Kings reserving the Foundations of Church-Government, and the Bishops under him, because of his Oath; yet allowing great alterations in the Government, as to the Exercise and Administration for Peace; see his Majesties Instructions to his Commissioners, with their Paper in Sir Rich. Bakers Chron. pag. 461. See also our present Sovereigns Declaration about Ecclesiastical affairs; and for the nature of such like Oaths, see the sence of the long Parliament, and of the Assembly in the Exhortation to the Covenant, p. 5. and 6.*

Whither are not many Scriptures themselves thus understood, with limitations of the general Expressions, according to the nature and condition of the Subject; and particularly, Scriptures requiring obedience to Kings, Masters, Husbands, Parents, &c. see Rom. 13. 5. with Beza's note, 1 Pet. 2. 13, &c. with Bishop Ushers power of Princes, Ephes. 6. 24, &c.

* *In all things. In every thing, &c.*

Whether

Whither this Oath in effect (though added, and in terms it differ for reasons before exprest) require more from us then we have already sworn unto, in the Oath of Allegiance and Supremacy.

* Alleg. No violence or hurt to Kings, Person, State, or Government, &c.

Suprem. In all Causes, and over all Persons Ecclesiastical, &c. I will assist and defend --- all Ecclesiastical Jurisdictions, Prebeminencies, &c. This not to alter. See Stat. 1. Eliz. 1. and 5 Eliz. 1.

Whither whatever the Covenant were in it self, and its imposing, can any sworn to it, now rationally suppose himself as bound by it to act against the Government, or towards the alteration of Government in Church or State; since such endeavours would be against the Laws of the Land, to which we owe obedience; against the terms of the Covenant it self, and the Exhortation to it, is lawfully, and in place and calling, &c. but especially against the Oath of Allegiance and Supremacy, with their antecedent obligation in force before, and consequently being renewed since the Kings return? Eccles. 8. 2.

Whither not to Endeavour, be more then not to Act against the Government of Church or State; or that not to act, be more then to be subject or submit; and whither such subjection or submission, be not my bounden duty to my Superiours

ours in such like cases from the Word of God? see *Rom.* 13. 1, &c. 5. &c. and *1 Pet.* 2. *Eccles.* 8. 2. &c. *Eccles.* 10. 8, 9, and 20. *Prov.* 30. 31. and *vers.* 24. 21, 22.

Whither *Apostles* and *primitive Christians*, made not great Conscience of submitting in such like matters, as appears by *Epistles* and *Church History*, (see *Bishop Ushers Power of Princes, and duty of Subjects*) and whither *Christianity* and *Laws of Christ*, do not bind us to the *peace* and *good behaviour* in all such matters as are not our *Rights*, but our *Superiours*, both in *War* and *Peace*, in *Church* or *State*.

Whither, if *consequences* may be considered, as the taking the Oath may offend many, and possibly (though *quere* how with our duty to our *Superiors* it may be suppos'd) it may not secure us, &c. so whither the *not taking it*, will not offend our *Governours*? and besides, bring such a *scandal* upon our whole *Profession*, as can never be wash'd avay, though with our *blood*, which God prevent, and teach us our duty, leaving *Events* to him.

Over and above; VVhither may not an *honest Christian* take a supposedly captious and ensnaring Oath, vvhhen the vvords are fair for an *equal* and an *honest* sence, betveen the imposer and the taker.

taker, and vvherein by honest men on every hand
it would and should be understood, especially in
an Oath betveen a *Ruler* and a *Subject* (vvhere
no such captious supposition can be made vvithout
sin) vvhen the *end* of Government, and of the
Oath it self *declared*, is nothing but the *peace* and
welfare both of Church and State.

* *This Quere borrowed from, and to be referred to the
Papers of another.*

FINIS.

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